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The Dual Nature of Pirenne's Theory on the Commercial Situation in the Mediterranean Regions during the Middle Ages

Pre-Islamic history directly revolved around two main political and economical powers, namely the Byzantine Empire covering Europe, Africa, West Asia, and the Persian Empire in Asia. Since the beginning of the seventh and during the eighth centuries, the newly forming Muslim state became the inheritor of both these empires.

From the Byzantine Empire, the Arabs gained their colonies in Asia, except Asia Minor; in the west they spread all of North Africa then expanded to Spain. It took them about a century to consolidate there, since they were the least adapted of all peoples to the building of an empire. Only occasionally Latin and Greek was replaced by the Arabic language in the main cities. New centres of urbanization were established in places which previously had started as military camps. The Arabs had always been builders. When their state took over the rule of a large tract of land, they founded many centres to control the land, rivers, routes and main strategic points. It is worth noting here that the Arabs used established numerous towns, mostly inland, but rarely far away from the sea coast; cf. for instance Al-Kūfa, Al-Fuṣṭāṭ or Al-Qayrawān. Many of these centres were located on lateral trade routes, which, in the course of time, became large, populous towns and gained great importance due to their location.¹ It could be said that during that time commercial factors to a large extent motivated the foundation of many states and cities.

Generally, the process of urbanization occurred alongside with the coming of Islam.² It is no surprise that recently one scholar described the Arab

¹ M.Lombard, *The Golden Age of Islam*, Translated by J.Spencer, North Holland Publishing Co., Amsterdam 1975, pp.121-134; N.Daniel, *The Arabs and Medieval Europe*, 2nd ed., London 1979, pp.6-7.

² 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Tārīḥ al-'allāma Ibn Ḥaldūn*, Vol.I, pp. 617, 620. See also M.Watt, *Islam and the Integration of Society*, fourth impression, London 1970, p.116.

Muslim civilization as a civilization of cities. Social and political migration over the Mediterranean coasts had begun as a result of this urbanization. The Latin and Greek population of the towns of the south-eastern coasts of Mediterranean withdrew to the northern coast.

Systematic Arab settlements began either by establishing a series of new towns or by replacing the previous population.³ Migration, voluntary or forced, was achieved by the Arab conquerors as early as the first decades of the Caliphate.

Mu'āwiya, the first Caliph of the Umayyads, transferred thousands of people from the conquered countries to the Mediterranean cities which had become partially empty. Some of these newcomers were Arabs, others were of the Jewish, Zūṭ or other races.⁴

Before the Arabs drove north across the Pyrenees, the demography of the Mediterranean coast already had entirely changed. Simultaneously, the process of socio-economic development was taking place. The most important element was the formation of the new towns, these attracted the privileged consumers of goods, soldiers and administrative officials. Subsequently this led to certain other divisions of economic activities between labourers, craftsmen and tradesmen. Concerning this point, Ashtor commented that the most characteristic phenomenon of the demographic development of Iraq in the Abbasid period was undoubtedly the growth of towns.⁵ Essentially Ashtor's remark is applicable to other Muslim regions inside the Abbasid domain.

The Arab administration allowed all the inhabitants of the conquered lands, either those who converted to Islam or those who retained their original faith, not only to preserve their former jobs but also to gain a new chance to work with their new Muslim governors. The Jews, Persians, Syrians and the Egyptians continued their trade activities with the non-Muslim world.

On the other hand, trade with the Western European world stopped. Immediately following the Arab invasion of Europe, the Syrian merchants left their trade centers in the country of Gaul.⁶ According to Dawson, colonies of Byzantine merchants, usually Syrian had been established in very important centers in the west of Europe, not only in Italy and Spain but

³ Lombard, *op.cit.*, pp. 118-9.

⁴ Al-Balāḍurī, Abū ʾl-Ḥasan, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, Maktabat al-Hilāl, Bayrūt 1983. pp. 133-369.

⁵ E. Ashtor, *The Near East in the Middle Ages*, London 1976. pp.89-90; Daniel, *ibid.*

⁶ Lombard, *op. cit.* pp.145-146; S.Runciman, *Al-Ḥaḍāra al-Bīzanṭīyya*, translated into Arabic by 'A. Gawād, Al-Qāhira 1961, p.198.

also throughout Gaul even as far as Paris.⁷ Subsequently, the Syrians left their colonies since they had become Arab subjects and no longer Byzantine subjects. Also Spain at the time of the Muslim conquest was inhabited by Levantine such as Syrians and Jews. Obviously the Syrians and Egyptians returned back to their homeland; the Jews from France came to stay in the Muslim regions. According to the Geniza documents, large groups of coreligionists from France came to live in Egypt.⁸

Over a long period and in a territory covering parts of three continents, the Arabs became the major power which dominated almost all coasts of the Mediterranean. Speaking on this subject, Ph. Hitti commented that the Mediterranean became an internal Muslim lake—his was coupled with the Arab occupation of the eastern, western and southern shores.⁹

Accordingly, world trade came under Arab control. It is frequently quoted that before the appearance of Islam there was real economical unity in the world of the Mediterranean Sea among the three continents. There is an overly presumptive theory which considered the establishment of the Muslim Empire as the cause of the final termination of this unity.¹⁰

Pirenne's theory and its controversial character

Henri Pirenne in his theory presented how the coming of Islam to the Mediterranean basin marked the end of this unity by creating a final break between East and West. The controversy which undoubtedly is found among the scholars with regard to this thesis is quite large, although Pirenne's work has vigorously been debated, it has finally been rejected.¹¹ Recently scholars came to the conclusion that the profound changes in early medieval Europe should not be attributed to adverse economic trends which were allegedly generated by hostile policy of the Muslim caliphate. There is

⁷ Ch. Dawson, *The Making of Europe*, New York 1956 pp. 106-107. See also in this concern M. Lombard, *L'or musulman du VIIIe au XIe siècle*, "Annales d'histoire economique et social", Paris 1947, vol. II, pp. 145-146.

⁸ S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza. I. Economic Foundation*, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1967. p. 68

⁹ Ph. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 3rd edition, London 1943. p. 113.

¹⁰ H. Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, translated into English by B. Miall, London 1954, pp. 152-153, 163.

¹¹ F. Gabrieli, *Islam in the Mediterranean World*, in: *The Legacy of Islam*, Edited by J. Schacht and C. E. Bosworth, 2nd edition, Oxford 1979, p. 67; Ashtor, op. cit, p. 102

no sufficient evidence to prove that Arabs desired to close the commerce with the West.¹²

From political point of view, the Mediterranean unity already had broken down a few centuries before the coming of Islam, especially since the barbarian invasion from the north.¹³ It seems that the relation of the Merovingian Gaul with the other countries along the Mediterranean either on the European side or in Asia and Africa was impeded by Vandal pirates from Africa. The shattered unity was never completely restored.

Contrary to the dichotomy of Pirenne's theory, the Christendom of the European world was already divided politically and economically between the Latin and the Byzantine. There seems to be little reason to suppose that the expansion of Islam was directly responsible for the changing of the trade balance between the two worlds. The objection which Pirenne cited resulted from his conclusion that the end of Mediterranean commercial life as a unity can be attributed not to the Germanic invasion, but to the advance of the Arabs.¹⁴

The Arabs' attempt to subdue the Mediterranean basin advanced during the first three centuries of their reign. Their main target was constantly directed at the consolidation of their siege of Constantinople; they attacked Italy, Greece and the Adriatic Sea, capturing the majority of the Mediterranean islands, but the outcome was hardly successful.¹⁵ It is very interesting to add here that the Arabs attempted to enter alliances with other peoples who were the enemies of Byzantium. At the time when the Arabs heavily attacked Byzantium from the east, they were engaged in raids in the area of Epirus, with the Adriatic as allies of the Slavs of the Peloponnese. They took part in the siege of the Greek city of Patras. The Arabs from Crete had also disembarked a number of times from the coast of Greece and its islands. Moreover, a kind of alliance between the Arabs and Bulgarians of the Balkan could have easily resulted in mutual gain.¹⁶

¹² D.C.Dennet, *Pirenne and Muhammad*, "Speculum" XIII, 1948, pp.165-190. Cf. also C.Cahen, *Quelques problèmes concernant l'expansion économique musulmane au Haut Moyen Age*, "Settimane de studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo" XII, 1965, pp.391-432.

¹³ Gabrieli, op. cit., p. 63; Pirenne, op. cit., pp.164-165.

¹⁴ D.Dunlop, *Arab Civilization to A.D.1500*, London 1971, p. 19; Daniel, op. cit., p.6.

¹⁵ A.Lewis, *Naval Power and Trade in the Mediterranean A.D. 500-1100*, Princeton 1951, p.132.

¹⁶ H.T.Norris, *Islam in the Balkans. Religion and Society Between Europe and the Arab World*, Columbia 1993, pp.19-20; Runciman, op. cit., pp. 40, 178. F.'Uṭmān, *Al-Hudūd al-Islāmiyya al-Biḏāniyya*, Al-Qāhira 1966, vol.III, pp.98-101.

Whether these reports were true or not, it is evident that the Arabs realized the political importance of Mediterranean unity and, consequently, their strategic point of view was always directed to the capture of Constantinople. Actually the Arabs' chief attack against Constantinople took place primarily during the Umayyad dynasty; the war continued with supremacy alternating between the Abbasids and the Byzantine without either side ever achieving a definite superiority. With the coming of the Abbasid dynasty and after the end of the second Islamic century, the war with Byzantium lost in intensity.

The European regions north of the Mediterranean were not economically interesting for the Arabs. It seems apparent that the Arabs concentrated their attacks on European shores of the central Mediterranean, Italian and Dalmatian coasts as a means of harassing, plundering and getting spoils.¹⁷

Perhaps at this time there were no European products which would have been interesting for commercial exchange with the Arabs. It seems that the West had little to offer in exchange, on the other hand, goods from the Muslim Caliphate were too expensive and too refined for Western Europe.¹⁸ This may also be attributed to the homogeneity of the Mediterranean basin. According to M. Cook, the Mediterranean world physically, climatically and potentially was a region of market homogeneity.¹⁹ One can be fairly certain that the importance of the Mediterranean Sea for the regions surrounding is derived from its location between the three continents and it is considered a transit area for the countries located on its coasts. The majority of goods crossing its basin came mostly from outside of these regions. The most persistent of these goods were, of course, the spices and silks of the Orient.²⁰

Byzantine policy towards trade

On the other hand, it is difficult to claim that the government in Constantinople was hostile to mercantile exchange, but, in general, merchants did not directly enjoy much power in the empire. In this respect, the most persistent motive behind the trade policies of Byzantium was the attempt to keep the Muslims as far away as possible from European trading.

¹⁷ Ibn al-Aṣīr, *Al-Kāmil fī at-tārīḥ*, Bulāq—Al-Qāhira 1290H, vol.VII, pp.2, 3, 22; vol.VIII, p.356.

¹⁸ S.N.Fisher, *The Middle East—A History*, London 1960, p.93

¹⁹ M.Cook, *Economic developments*, in: *The Legacy of Islam*, op. cit., pp.216-217. Cf. also A.S.Ehrenkreutz, *Another Orientalist's Remarks concerning the Pirene Thesis*, JESHO XV, I-II, June 1972, pp.94-104.

²⁰ Runciman, op. cit., p. 196.

They also tried to enfeeble European trade by practicing embargo and boycott policies against any European country which tried to set up commercial links with the Muslims.

Before the coming of Islam, the northern Byzantine provinces in Africa always kept closer relation with Constantinople, except during the period in which they were under the Vandal domination. The Latin West, since the barbarian invasions, remained independent, although it was still maintaining economical links with Byzantium.

A number of phenomena indicated that Byzantium had had its own political interests in the Latin West. The most obvious example of this was a series of decisions issued by the Byzantine authorities, from the fourth century on, according to which the merchants should stop dealing in gold with the western barbarians, but also to refund their golden stock, which was actually in the form of Byzantine golden currency²¹.

According to Lopez' analysis, the shortage of gold in the West became tangible within the course of time. The West stopped coining its own gold money, in France and Italy since the second half of the eighth century this has been imposed as a result of the Byzantine policy²².

Practically, the Empire took an oriental policy regarding this issue. Since Constantine the Great moved the capital to Constantinople, the economical motive behind this action being evident: it clearly was economic determinism resulting from the translocation of trade balance from the west to the eastern half of the Mediterranean; the Asian provinces and Egypt became the store of the imperial gold.

Caliphal policy towards trade

In the Muslim world, medieval trade expanded with the organization of the large new Muslim Caliphate which became capable of ensuring protection of trade routes which linked points inside the state. The new Muslim state, in general, enjoyed a good locality, which made it closer to China and India in the East, Europe at the north and west, east Africa and south of the Great Desert in the south. From geopolitical point of view, the Muslim world had a peculiarity which played a far greater role than any in other Empire established before.²³ It should be added that the Muslim Caliphate was located near the major seas,

²¹ M. Bloch, *Le problème de l'or au moyen-âge*, "Annales d'histoire économique et sociale", 1933.

²² Lopez, R.S. *Mohammed and Charlemagne. A revision*, "Speculum" XVII, 1943; see also Runciman, op. cit., p. 206.

²³ Lombard, *The Golden Age...*, op. cit., p. 95.

including the Mediterranean. All these factors, plus the wide extent of the Muslim lands along with the high level civilization of the countries dominated by the Arabs, created extensive local and international trade. In addition to all that, the Abbasids had a different outlook towards trade than the Umayyads who were for a long time neglected in the matter of trade.

A steady supply of raw material was brought up by Muslim merchants to many of the main commercial and industrial cities scattered all over the Caliphate. Other luxury items from all places guaranteed a great commercial activity, not only in local trade but also in trade with other countries outside *dār al-islām*.

In general, the caliphate officials knew a great deal about the states relation to commerce and tradesmen. The Muslim state, during the Umayyad and the Abbasid periods, had always had a tendency to promote local trade and international trade in particular, even with their chief enemy, namely Byzantium. Muslim records mentioned that when the Muslim forces invaded the Byzantine provinces, the inhabitants were granted peace without regard to their religion or race, they were allowed to preserve their former jobs without any exceptions. ‘Umar Ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb, the second caliph, as a result of his wise decision, prevented the Arabs from becoming the owners of the newly conquered lands which remained under original ownership. Of course, this was rather a political decision than an economic one.²⁴ Moreover, the Muslim authorities by this time gave the Byzantine merchants the right to wander and pursue their business inside Muslim lands, even during war operations between the two powers. Arabic sources tell us that when Ḥālīd Ibn al-Walīd occupied Ba‘labakk in Syria, he granted peace to the inhabitants of the town including the Byzantine merchants and gave them permission which enabled them to conduct business all over the provinces conquered by the Muslims.²⁵ During the Umayyad period, most of the trade business stayed in the hands of the non-Muslim subjects and foreign merchants without notable interference from the authorities.

Only sometimes did the Umayyad interfere in trade in a situation which ran contrary to—or conflicted with—the supremacy of the state. According to Arabic sources, during the reign of the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, a decision was made to prevent the exportation to Byzantium of some goods which were very important and considered as strategic at that time. The caliph’s decision also included the prohibition of exportation of Egyptian papyrus

²⁴ Al-Balāḍurī, op. cit., p. 268.

²⁵ Ibid, p.136. About the free trade between the Muslims and non-Muslims see also An-Nisābūrī, *Kitāb ādāb aṣ-ṣuḥba wa-ḥusn al-‘iṣra*, edited by M.J.Kister, Jerusalem 1954, p.76.

decorated with the cross and mentioning the Trinity.²⁶ This decision was mainly political, designed to declare power and supremacy of the Caliphate in respect to Byzantium. As of now, there is no evidence which would confirm that papyrus was considered as a monopoly of the state either by production or by marketing as it had been since the time of Ptolemaic until the reign of Byzantium.²⁷

It is a well established fact that 'Abd al-Malik's decision was one in a series of administrative and economical reforms which reflected the competition between the Arabs and the Byzantines in the field of commerce. In the sphere of reforms, the change in the monetary system was also considered as one of the major steps made by the Caliph, 'Abd al-Malik in this context.²⁸

This action has been considered by scholars as a very important factor in the issue of the nationalization and Arabization of the Muslim economy before the Byzantine.²⁹ According to this reform, in the year 695/6, the caliph decided to mint his own gold and silver coins in Damascus. Thus the Muslim state came to have their own golden dinar with the weight of 4.25 gm. Dirhams had the weight of 2.97 gms. According to Ashtor, this was between the years 696-698.³⁰

The principles of free economic started to play an effective role in the socio-economic life of the Caliphate. It can be argued that historically economical changes contributed to social progress in rise of economic welfare. The most important change was brought into effect by the Abbasids who established equality between all the subjects of the state, moreover, it gave the non-Arab subjects a good position in government administration.³¹ Abbasid internal policy was apparently in contrast to that of the Umayyads, this, of course, was a main factor which limited the role of the Arab oli-

²⁶ Al-Balāḍurī, op. cit., p. Al-'Askarī, *Kitāb al-awā'il*, edited by M. al-Miṣrī and W. Qaṣṣāb, Dimašq 1975, vol. I, pp.368-369.

²⁷ According to Ṣubḥī Labīb, Egypt was the main supplier of papyrus until the tenth century, not only to the Byzantine markets but also to the Occident: Ṣubḥī Labīb, *Egyptian commercial policy in the Middle Ages. Studies in the economic history of the Middle East. From the rise of Islam to the present day*, edited by M. Cook, London 1970, p.63. See also Lopez, op.cit.

²⁸ Al-Balāḍurī, op. cit. p.237,447. Al-'Askarī, ibid. Al-Maqrīzī, *Šudūr al-'uqūd fī ḍikr an-nuqūd*, ed. by Daniel Eustache in: *Etudes de numismatique et de metrologie musulmanes*, "Hespéris Tamuda", vol.X, fasc. 1-2, 1969, p. 107.

²⁹ Ph.Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, op. cit., pp. 217-218; C.Brockelmann, *History of the Islamic Peoples*, translated by Carmichael and M.Perlman, New York 1947, p.82.

³⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, op.cit., pp. 107-108; see also, Ashtor, op. cit., pp. 81-82.

³¹ Watt, *Islam ad the Integration of Society*, op. cit., pp.167-168; Ehrenkreutz, ibid.

garchy in the state, giving a kind of equal opportunity for business to every citizen. Recent research has shown that the Arabs guaranteed free commercial activities for Muslims and non-Muslims in the Caliphate, moreover, some scholars maintain that some of the economic sectors during the Abbasid period may have had a capitalistic character.³² Obviously, all of these reforms and changes created a suitable atmosphere for the activation of economical life and, subsequently, of commerce.

On the other hand, after stabilization, when the expansion of the Caliphate ended, the Arabs themselves began to be involved in socio-economic life; with other Muslims and non-Muslim they participated in commercial activities.

In the early Middle Ages, the Muslim authorities did not involve themselves excessively in commercial relations, neither in local nor in international trade. Such dealings were socially or even spiritually rejected and not acceptable from the point of view of jurisprudence in Islam. Ibn Ḥaldūn and Ibn al-Azraq considered such a practice by the authorities as one of the negative factors which economically debilitated the state.³³

However, historical Muslim sources relate to us some of the irregular aspects in the matter of state interfering with trade. Aṭ-Ṭabarī in his historical work, mentions that the Umayyad Caliph Hišām Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik was involved in grain trade, moreover, he monopolized dealings in grain in some of his Muslim provinces such as in As-Sawād in Iraq.³⁴ Such behaviour carried on by the Caliph was criticized by historians and rejected by the theologians. Even the tradition itself in the court of the Caliphate did not allow the Caliph nor any of his high officials to perform such works.³⁵ Ibn Ḥaldūn and Ibn al-Azraq condemned state monopoly in trade or in any economical field. Referring to this point, Ibn Ḥaldūn stated that monopoly by authority is considered as an injustice (for the people) and a corruption of the state, monopoly also has adverse influence upon local trade and foreign trade likewise. Muslim law forbids and outlaws such processes.³⁶

Other goods were a monopoly of the state not because of their commercial importance but because of their nature as a royal goods which were only

³² Ashtor, op. cit., p. 113.

³³ Ibn Ḥaldūn, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 512-513; Ibn al-Azraq, *Badā'i' as-sulk fī tabā'i' al-mulk*, ed. by S. an-Naššār, vol. I, Baġdād 1977, pp. 208-210.

³⁴ Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ ar-rusul wa-āl-mulūk*, ed. by M.A. Ibrāhīm, Al-Qāhira 1979, Vol. VII, p. 154.

³⁵ A.ad-Dūrī, *Tārīḥ al-'Irāq al-iqtšādī fī āl-qarn ar-rābi' al-ḥiġrī*, Baġdād 1967, p. 120.

³⁶ Ibn Ḥaldūn, ibid., see also Ibn al-Azraq, ibid.

consumed by the Caliph and his court inside the palaces. Those items which were given by the Caliph as gifts to his nearest companions also fell under the monopoly. Goods such as royal robes, in Arabic *ḥila'*, and other items were specially made in palace workshops which were called *dār at-ṭirāz*. The minting of money was also the monopoly of the state and it was only produced in mints belonging to the government.³⁷

The early medieval expansion was entirely connected with the organization of larger states which owned the capability of insuring the provision of raw materials, manufactured goods, and that it was able to maintain and protect the trade roads inside its territories. Al-Bīrūnī in his work *Tahdīd* commented this as follows: "The power of Muslim state and its extension from the Andalus in the West to the outermost reaches of China and Central India in the East and from Abyssinia and Bilād az-Zanġ [East Africa] in South to the Slav and Turkish land in North, enabled many nations to live together in intimacy, without allowing outsiders to bother them or to interrupt the traffic roads. Other peoples who were non-Muslims and still pagans became to regard the Muslim state and its peoples with respect."³⁸ Al-Bīrūnī's point of view is confirmed by recent scholarship. According to Arnold there was a period during which the travelers could pass from the confines of China to the Pillars of Hercules, from the banks of the Indus to the Cilician Gates, from Oxus to the shores of the Atlantic, without stepping outside the boundaries of the territory ruled over by the Caliph in Damascus or Baġdād. Even after empire broke up into separate principalities, the journey of the Muslim traveler was facilitated by that brotherhood of Islam which gave to the Muslim World its cosmopolitan character.³⁹

Minor details scattered in the Muslim sources which must not pass unnoticed indicated that for two centuries the Arabs had an idea to once again unify the Mediterranean region. The Arabs planned to attack Byzantium from two wings. This was after their invasion of southern Europe which reached Spain, southern France and Italy. There are two texts referring to this plan. One of them comes from Al-Bakrī who stated that the caliph, 'Uṭmān wrote to his army in Africa which were ready to strike forward that Constantinople could be invaded from the side of Al-Andalus. The caliph stated that if they did this, their army would share the spoils of the invasion.⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibn Ḥaldūn, op. cit., pp. 462, 472, Aṭ-Ṭabarī, op.cit., vol.VIII, pp.375, 390.

³⁸ Al-Bīrūnī, *Kitāb taḥdīd nihayāt al-amākin li-taḥqīq masāfāt al-masākin*, edited by P. Bulgakov, "Maġallat Ma'had al-Maḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiyya", vol.VIII, al-Qahira 1962, p. 225.

³⁹ T.V.Arnold, *Arab Travellers and Merchants A.D.1000-1500*, in: *Travel and Travellers of the Middle Ages*, 3rd edition, edited by A.P.Newton, London 1949, p. 89.

Other similar information can be found in the work of Al-Ḥimyarī whose narration dates back to the time of the Spanish invasion. The author said: "when Mūsā (Ibn Nuṣayr) invaded Al-Andalus, he wanted to go through the land of the Ifriṅḡa (Franks) to come to the great land (Europe) from whence he could join the Muslim people in Aš-Šām (Syria). He hoped to find an overland road for the Muslim people of Al-Andalus which would enable them to go east and back without needing to travel by sea."⁴¹ According to Ibn Ḥaldūn, 'Abd ar-Raḥmān Ibn Mu'āwiya ('Abd Ar-Raḥmān I may be meant here) the *amīr* of Al-Andalus had the same idea, not as a target to unify the region but as a way by which he could attack the Abbasids⁴².

Another alternative way for trade with Europe had been found by Muslim merchants through the Caucasian gates and Turkish lands. A good amount of trade between the Muslim Caliphate and the Slavonic world was going through Eastern Europe. The steppe regions and the Volga basin provided the Muslim markets with many luxury goods which were not available in European regions of the Mediterranean basin.

As a result of the aforementioned study, it could be said that the Pirenne thesis has two contradictory aspects. On the one hand, it is difficult to consider that the establishment of the Muslim Empire was the cause of the ultimate termination of the Mediterranean economical unity.⁴³ There also seems to be little reason to suppose that the expansion of Islam was directly responsible for the changing of the trade balance between the two worlds. On the other hand, most probably the coming of Islam to the Mediterranean basin marked the end of its cultural and partially its political unity by creating a final break between East and West.

⁴⁰ Al-Bakrī, Abū 'Ubayd, *Al-Masālik wa-āl-mamālik*, edited by 'Abd ar-Raḥman al-Ḥaḡḡī, Bayrūt 1968, p. 130.

⁴¹ Al-Ḥimyarī, *Ar-Rawḍ al-mi'tār fī ḥabar al-aqtār*, edited by Iḥsān 'Abbās, Bayrūt 1975, p.50.

⁴² Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Tārīḥ*, op. cit., vol. III, p.446.

⁴³ H.Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*, op.cit., pp. 152-153, 163.